

Helping you put things right



Annual review
2013

Message from the Chair

We've reached the end of a seventh successful year of the Dental Complaints Service (DCS). I am proud to say that this year has seen some major improvements to the way we work.

The DCS helps to resolve complaints between patients who have had private dental treatment and their dental professionals. We are funded by the General Dental Council so the service is free to use.

The successes that have been achieved over the last year include the redevelopment of our website. We've redesigned both the content and the look of the website to make sure that it is more user friendly for patients and dental professionals who use, or enquire about, our services. Our website is the first point of contact many people have with the DCS so it's vital that visitors to the site find it clear and informative. The wording on the website has been updated to make it very clear what we can help with, and also circumstances where we are unable to help but can direct people to other organisations that can. The website also clearly explains the processes involved in resolving a complaint so that both patients and dental

professionals know exactly what to expect when they contact the DCS.

We've also worked hard this year to reduce the time that it takes for a complaint to be resolved. We strongly believe that a speedy resolution to complaints is in the best interest of both the patient and the dental professional involved. With this in mind, I'm very pleased to say that we have reduced the time it takes to resolve complaints from 7 to 6.5 days.

In our experience delays with a complaint being raised is more likely to make it difficult to resolve. Another key development this year to the way the DCS works has been the introduction of a 12 month time limit for reporting complaints to us. This change was made to ensure that any concerns in relation to dental care were raised as soon as possible providing the opportunity for a resolution to be reached in a timely manner.

All of these achievements would not have been possible without the hard work of the staff of the DCS. We regularly receive excellent feedback from both patients and dental professionals who say that they highly value the friendly and professional service that they receive from DCS staff. I would also like to thank the volunteer panel members who make a great contribution to the work of the DCS and finally my fellow Advisory Board members.

Looking forward to 2014, we have big plans for the next twelve months. Among these will be the introduction of a new complaints management database. This will facilitate the DCS working even more efficiently and will help us to improve our processes further in the future. I am confident that we will build on the successes of 2013 to achieve even more next year.

Derek Prentice

Chair of the DCS Advisory Board until December 2013

Update on 2013

“The complaint was approached and sorted out in a quick and fair way” Dental professional

Website

The DCS website was updated in May 2013 with improved content for both patients and dental professionals in relation to our process.

Patient leaflet

Our patient leaflet was also updated in 2013 with a clear explanation of the process for dealing with complaints and also signposting for those patients who we are unable to assist.

Average resolution time

The average resolution time has been reduced from 7 to 6.5 days.



Time remit

The DCS changed the time remit for dealing with complaints from February 2006 to, “within 12 months of the treatment taking place or within 12 months of becoming aware that there is something to complain about”.

This change was made in order to ensure that any concerns were raised promptly and a resolution reached as quickly as possible, and also to bring the service into line with similar organisations.

“Fully understanding, excellent advice, non-judgmental” Patient

Statistics

Number of complaints

Jan - Dec 2013

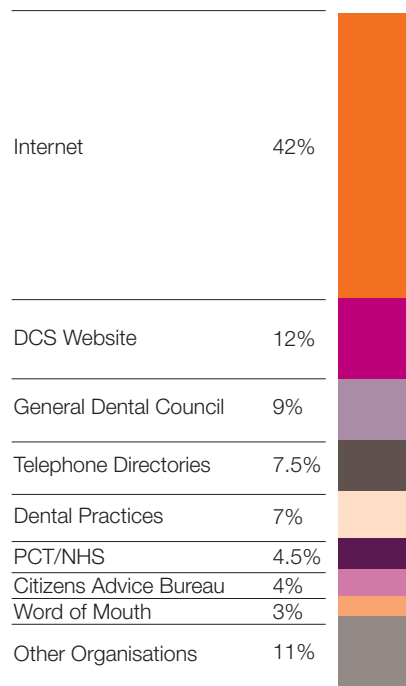


Jan - Dec 2012

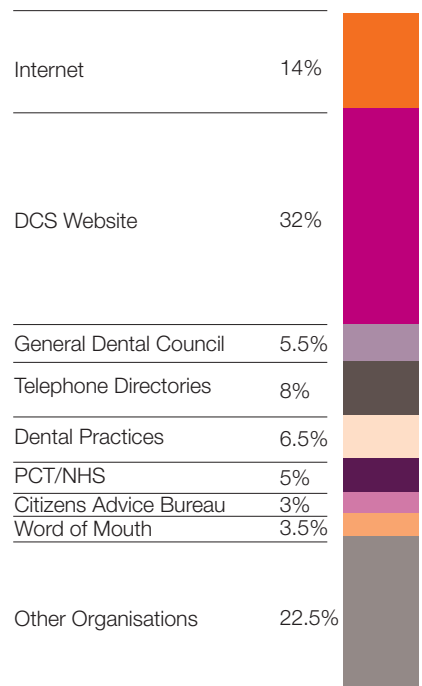


Contact source

2013

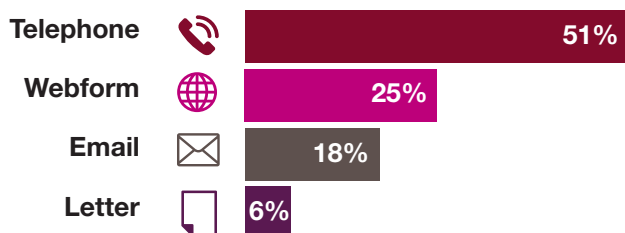


2012

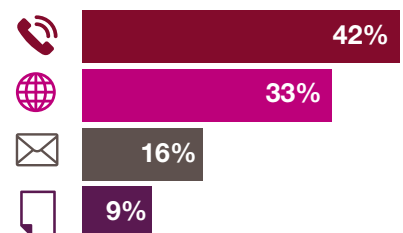


Customer contact method

2013

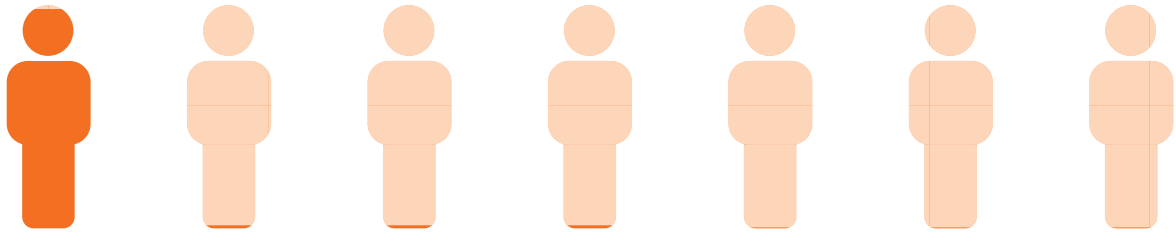


2012



Statistics

Who did patients complain about?

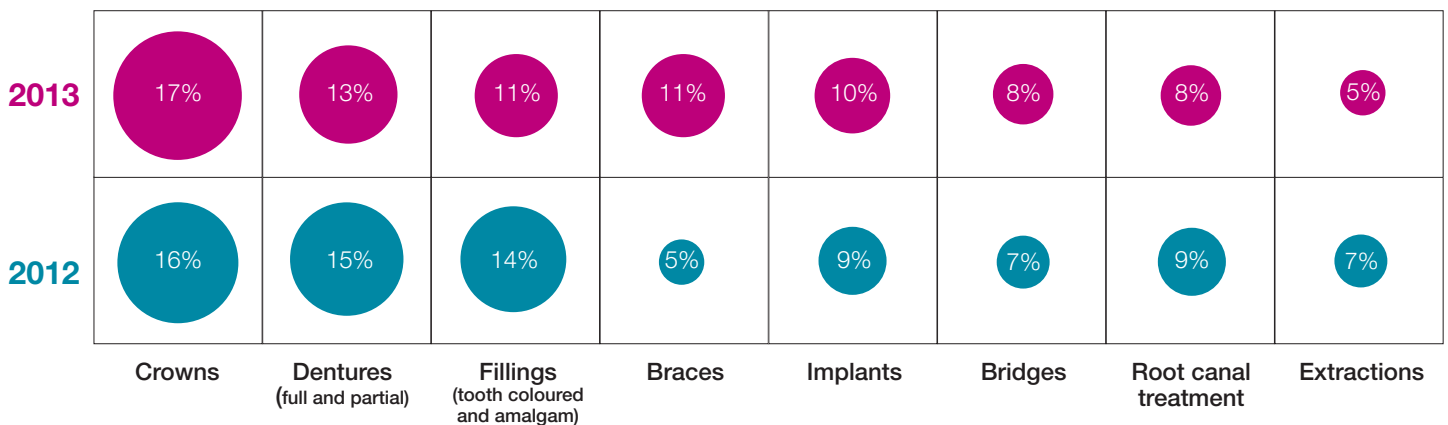


Profession	Dentist	Clinical Dental Technician	Hygienist	Dental Technician	Dental Nurse	Dental Therapist	Orthodontic Therapist
2013	96%	1.5%	1.15%	1%	0.15%	0.15%	0.05%
2012	97.3%	1.4%	0.4%	0.6%	0.05%	0%	0.25%

Call totals to 08456 local rate telephone number



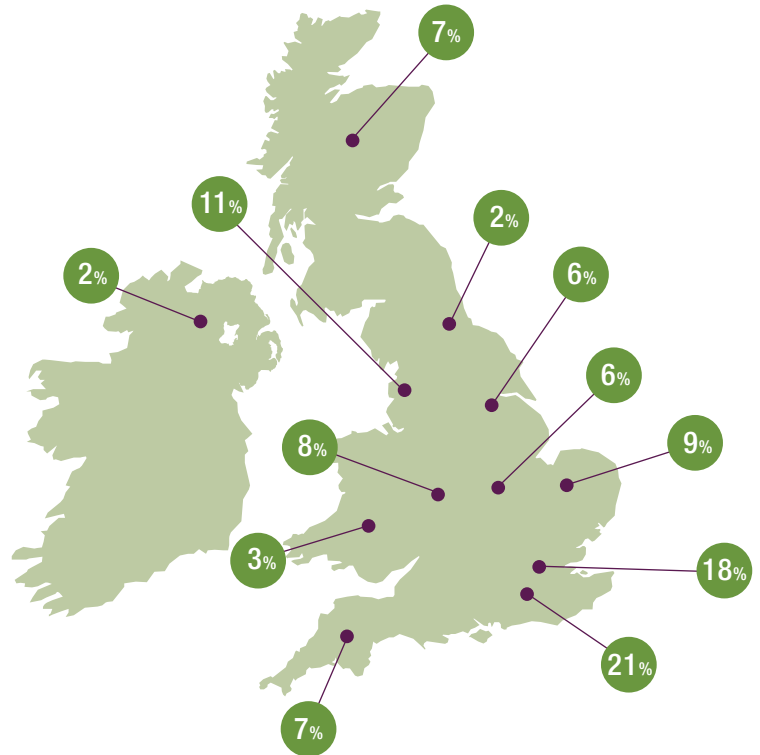
Top areas of complaint for treatment issues



Statistics

Geography of complaints

	2013	2012
Scotland	7%	7%
Wales	3%	3%
Northern Ireland	2%	1.5%
England	88%	88.5%
North East	2%	2%
North West	11%	10%
Yorkshire & Humber	6%	6%
East Midlands	6%	5%
West Midlands	8%	7%
East of England	9%	10%
London	18%	18%
South East	21%	21.5%
South West	7%	9%



Panel meetings

	2013	2012
Scotland	2	0
Northern Ireland	2	0
Wales	1	1
England	13	15
South East	6	10
North West	2	1
South West	2	1
East Midlands	1	0
West Midlands	1	2
East of England	1	0
York and Humberside	0	1
Total	18	16



Case study 1

“The manner in which I was initially contacted was very friendly, non-accusatory and professional. The process was explained in detail and I was given the opportunity to ask questions” **Dental professional**

What was the complaint about

The patient had a 2 unit bridge which kept falling out. He was initially told that it would last 4-5 years but after 1 month it fell out. The patient returned to the dentist and had the bridge re-fixed with a different cement, however, 3-4 weeks later it fell out again.

The patient returned to the dentist and the bridge was re-cemented again. When the bridge failed for the third time the patient requested a full refund, however this was declined. When the bridge fell out on the fourth occasion the patient wrote to the dentist stating that he was leaving his care.

Outcome of the local resolution

The patient contacted the DCS who advised him to put his complaint in writing to the dentist, stating the outcome he was seeking to resolve the matter. The patient had previously only requested a refund verbally.

How did the DCS assist in resolving the complaint

The patient followed the advice given by the DCS and wrote to the dentist with his complaint. The DCS was then informed that the dentist had responded to the patient's letter and had also enclosed a cheque for a full refund as requested.



Case study 2

“The Complaints Officer was professional and kept me updated along the way with a positive outcome reached” **Patient**

What was the complaint about

The patient had a filling placed, however when this had been completed he had a yellow stain on the tooth. The dentist had now also left the practice.

Outcome of the local resolution

The patient was aware of which practice the dentist had moved to therefore the DCS advised the patient to write to the dentist there, as well as at his GDC registered address with his concerns.

How did the DCS assist in resolving the complaint

The patient followed the advice given by the DCS and wrote to the dentist with his complaint. He then received a call from the dentist inviting him to an appointment to discuss his concerns. The patient attended the appointment and following an examination, the stain was treated and removed. The professional relationship was also maintained.



“Involvement of a third party was helpful. I felt the service was sympathetic to both parties, not judgmental and acted fairly for both parties involved in the dispute”

Dental professional

Case study 3

“I was happy with the speed and thoroughness that my complaint was dealt with and resolved” **Patient**

What was the complaint about

The patient completed a course of treatment with the dentist, for which she paid £8,500. This involved bridges, crowns and implants. A crown and the 5 implants placed all failed over a period of time.

How was it resolved

The patient wrote to the dentist detailing her complaint and received a response offering a refund of £2,176, £1,000 of which was a goodwill gesture.

The patient contacted the DCS advising that she was not prepared to accept the offer made and in order to resolve the complaint was looking for a refund of £6,000.

The patient emailed the dentist explaining this and copied the DCS into her response. The DCS contacted the dentist, discussed the complaint and asked for clarification of the treatment charges. The DCS also suggested that the dentist contact his indemnifiers for advice.

Following this, the DCS received a letter from the dentist stating that he had consulted with his indemnifiers and would be offering a refund. The dentist wrote to the patient offering a refund of £6,000 and included a form of agreement.

The patient signed the agreement and returned this to the dentist. The DCS then received a call from the patient advising that she had received a cheque for £6,000 from the dentist and confirmed that this had now resolved the matter.



Case study 4

“It helped enormously that I felt supported through the process” **Patient**

What was the complaint about

The patient attended the dentist for a check-up and he recommended that she have her teeth whitened. She agreed that her teeth were not as white as they could be, however, she had no desire for bright white teeth.

The dentist showed the patient how to use the whitening trays, however, she found them too fiddly and was worried that she might drop them. She told the dentist that she did not want to use these. When the patient got to the reception she was charged £250. She had no idea what the charge was for, however, was told that it was for the tooth whitening which she did not want and for which she had not received any trays or chemicals.

The patient was seeking a refund of £250.

How was it resolved

The patient contacted the DCS who advised her to write to the dentist with her complaint. The DCS contacted the dentist as the patient did not receive a response. The dentist stated that the patient's letter had not been received although it had been hand delivered.

The dentist advised that he had carried out chair-side cleaning and also tooth whitening which took approximately 45 minutes and cost £250. However, he would be happy to waive the lab bill for the trays and cleaning materials that the patient did not receive. He said that this amounted to approximately £50. The DCS agreed to send him a copy of the patient's letter.

The DCS contacted the patient and relayed the dentist's view of the matter. The patient recalled receiving treatment at the practice and complained that following the cleaning, her teeth were no longer smooth and shiny and they now felt sandy.



She also felt that her teeth were no whiter than previous. The DCS explained that the dentist had offered a refund of £50 to resolve the matter.

The patient declined the offer of £50 and the dentist stated he was not prepared to increase his offer, the DCS then invited both parties to attend a panel meeting. However, prior to the panel meeting taking place, the dentist made an increased offer of £75 which the patient accepted in resolution of the complaint.

Case study 5

“They were impartial and therefore did not take sides”

Dental professional

What was the complaint about

The patient was referred to the dentist for the re-root treatment of lower right 6 (LR6) and lower right 4 (LR4). She paid £950 and £850 respectively. The patient experienced pain and abscesses in the area and requested a full refund of £1,800 as she felt the re-root treatments were not carried out correctly, which caused the failure of the subsequent bridge.

What was the outcome sought

The patient wrote to the dentist advising that she was unhappy with the treatment provided and requested a refund. The dentist replied to the patient in full. She wrote that she had explained to the patient that both teeth had been poorly root treated in the past; LR4 still had a broken instrument in it and LR6 had unfilled canals and presented an infection. The dentist stated that it was explained to the patient that there was only a 75% success rate if she was able to

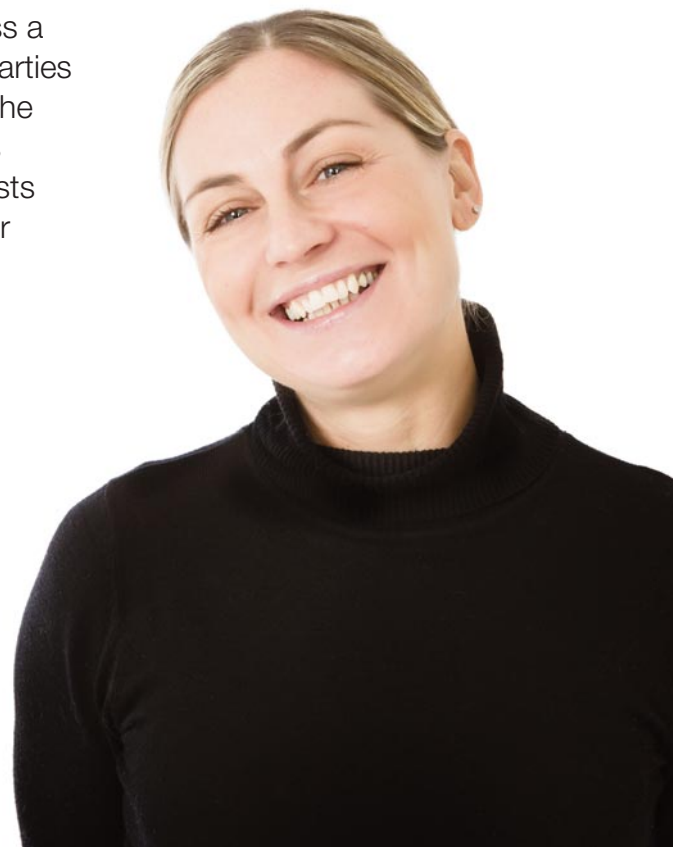
clean the root canals properly and remove the broken instrument. The dentist also explained that she had warned the patient of the prognosis for the teeth. DCS tried to facilitate a resolution; however neither party was prepared to move from their position.

The panel meeting

The meeting lasted for one hour and 45 minutes. There were two adjournments; the first was called so that the panel could regroup and discuss a way to encourage both parties to reach an agreement. The second adjournment was called to allow the panellists to consider and write their recommendation.

The outcome

The outcome of the meeting was that there was no complaint to answer. The patient had been informed of the cost and the uncertain prognosis of the re-root fillings prior to treatment and the dentist had done as well as clinical conditions would allow.



Case study 6

“My query was dealt with courteously and efficiently. Regular follow-up calls were received regarding progress” **Patient**

What was the complaint about

The patient had 7 veneers at upper right 3, 2, 1 (UR3, UR2, UR1) and upper left 1,2,3,4 (UL1, UL2, UL3, UL4) as well as a crown at upper right 4 (UR4). The patient was unhappy that she had a crown at UR4 when they had only discussed and agreed a veneer for that tooth. She was also unhappy with the colour of all veneers and the crown. Additionally, she also stated that 3 veneers had failed at UR1, UL1 and UL4.

What was the outcome sought

The patient sought a full refund of the amount originally paid for the 7 veneers and crown, namely £2,780, plus a contribution towards remedial treatment of £1,820, totalling £4,600.

The patient had not been informed that she would be having a crown placed on UR4. When the patient raised her complaint with the dentist, he advised her that he would refund

or replace any individual veneers. The patient explained that 3 veneers had failed and that she was also unhappy with the colour of all the veneers and crown. She therefore requested a full refund for the 7 veneers and crown as well as a contribution towards the remedial treatment cost. The dentist offered to refund the cost of the 3 failed veneers, totalling £960. The patient declined the offer.

The panel meeting

The meeting lasted for 2 hours and there were 2 adjournments. The first was called to allow both parties to reconsider their position and the panel to discuss ways of moving forward. The second adjournment was called as neither party was willing to move from their position; the panellists therefore needed to consider their recommendation.



The outcome

The panel made a recommendation for a refund of £2,780. The panel noted the failure of at least 3 veneers and acknowledged the need for these to be replaced. They also felt that in order for the colour of the replacements to match the remaining teeth, the crown and all the veneers would need to be replaced at the same time. The panel's recommendation was upheld.

Plans for 2014

Implementation of new Dynamics CRM

The new complaints management database will be implemented in the first half of 2014. This will facilitate the DCS working even more efficiently and will help us improve our processes and reporting further in the future.

Advertising Campaign

An advertising campaign will take place throughout the year in order to raise awareness of the service. This will include articles in newspapers and magazines and also online marketing.

New Expert Advice Seminars

We are currently planning 2-3 seminars a year with expert stakeholders to provide guidance and feedback on the service and its plans as well as specific expert advice on key issues.

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We are committed to promoting and developing equal opportunities in all our work. We want to make sure that everyone can access our services.

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